

**CULTURAL COUNTERPOINTS:
Examining the Musical Interactions between the U.S. and Latin America**



**Kielian-Gilbert, Marianne (Indiana University):
“Bordering Spaces and Encounters in Music of Gabriela Ortiz”**

Abstract:

The Mexican city of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, across the river from El Paso, Texas, has become a flashpoint for the complex of values of border relations between the United States and Mexico. Two works of Mexican composer Gabriela Ortiz confront ever-present problems of drug trafficking and violent death (the “disappeared women of Ciudad”) in, respectively, her video-opera *¡Únicamente la verdad!* (Only the Truth!) (2008-10) and 2009 “requiem” setting *Río Bravo* for six female voices and crystal cups to text by Mónica Sánchez Escuer.

¡Únicamente la verdad! crosses boundaries of fact and fiction, myth and reality, documentary, opera, and corrido (Mexican ballad). Drawing on specific journalistic reports, it explores border imaginations of Camelia *La Tejana*, a woman fictionalized in the narcocorrido *Contrabando y traición* (Smuggling and Betrayal) made popular by the norteño music band *Los Tigres del Norte* in the 1970s. In multiple musical references (corrido, la música ranchera, cumbia del norte, art/popular music), scene five enacts the journalist César Güemes’s interview of Camelia María, one of the “Camelias” of the opera, and her resistance to his attempt to pin down the “real” Camelia.

Ortiz’s 2009 work, *Río Bravo* takes a different turn in honoring the “lost “disappeared” women (*Desaparecidos*) of the Juárez maquiladoras (sweatshops). Their voices, “without echo”, multiply through work’s musical “echoing”, articulating the strangeness of their musical displacements of Escuer’s poem. I consider how private spaces—the interview, the requiem—can have public impact in musically enacting and ritualizing the stark realities of individual experience and loss.

How to Cite this Paper:

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Editorial Disclaimer:

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